



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

251 Causeway Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2119

JANE M. SWIFT
GOVERNOR

BOB DURAND
SECRETARY

Tel. (617) 626-1000
Fax (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

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Contact: Doug Pizzi
617-626-1118

Secretary Durand signs new Environmental Justice Policy *Policy aims at healthful environment for all*

ROXBURY – Surrounded by environmental advocates, members of the business community, and city and state officials, Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, today signed one of the most far reaching Environmental Justice policies in the country at a ceremony in Orchard Park.

Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits. It is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from pollution and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment.

“It is fitting we are here at Orchard Park, a symbol of what the Environmental Justice policy will advance in the coming months and years – a lasting environmental legacy for all of our communities,” said Secretary Durand. “This park is a symbol of the strength of environmental justice because its restoration and enhancements were in large part due to an urban self help grant the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) awarded the City of Boston in 2001 after hearing your voices.”

EOEA’s policy makes environmental justice an integral consideration in the implementation of all state environmental programs, including, but not limited to, the grant of financial resources, the development, implementation and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies, and the provision of access to both active and passive open space.

The policy focuses EOEA resources to serve the high-minority/low-income neighborhoods in Massachusetts to ensure that residents have a strong voice in environmental decision-making and equal access to state environmental resources.

This policy identifies a number of specific services to be provided to Environmental Justice (EJ) populations by the Secretary, EOEA agencies and other related state agencies:

- *Increasing Public Participation/Outreach:* To enhance opportunities for residents to participate in environmental decision-making, the policy calls for the appointment of a Director of Environmental Justice and Brownfields Programs within the Office of the Secretary. The policy requires EOEA agencies to prepare public participation strategies, to conduct EJ training programs, to develop agency and program fact sheets in languages other than English, and to start up Regional Agency EJ Outreach Teams. These teams will meet with neighborhood residents and community-based organizations to assist the agencies in targeting services and resources.

- *Minimizing Risk:* To minimize risks to these neighborhoods, the policy requires EOEAs to target their compliance, enforcement and technical assistance, giving priority to EJ Populations to ensure that all existing facilities in these neighborhoods comply with all environmental rules and regulations. To address the issue of increased risk from proposed sources of pollution, the policy requires enhanced environmental review of new or expanding large sources of air emissions and regional waste facilities in these neighborhoods through the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).
- *Encouraging Investments:* To encourage investment in economic growth in these neighborhoods, in particular where an opportunity exists to clean up a contaminated site and encourage its clean, productive use, the policy outlines ways in which the MEPA has recognized remediation projects as environmentally beneficial and reduced or eliminated the need for MEPA review. The policy outlines a process for MEPA to expedite the review of brownfields redevelopment projects that offer opportunities to clean up contaminated sites and to bring them into clean productive use.
- *Infusing State Resources:* Through this policy, EOEAs expand their brownfields efforts to support the development of an inventory of Underutilized Commercial/Industrial Properties in the Commonwealth and commits nearly \$1 million in EOEAs capital funds in FY 2003 to support the assessment and clean up of 21E sites within EJ Communities. It also requires EOEAs and their agencies to incorporate EJ as a criterion for awarding technical assistance, grants, audits and 21E site investigations in EJ populations. Lastly, the policy promotes economic development projects that incorporate cleaner production practices in neighborhoods where EJ populations reside and targets open space resources to more effectively create, restore, and maintain open spaces located in neighborhoods where EJ Populations reside.

The Environmental Justice policy is an outgrowth of Secretary Durand's Community Preservation Initiative, which gives tools to people at the local level in an effort protect the quality of life and unique character of Massachusetts' communities.

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